

**CHAFEE FOSTER CARE INDEPENDENCE PROGRAM STATE PLAN  
STATE OF IDAHO  
FFYs 2005 - 2009**

**Program Plan Narrative**

1. The Idaho Department of Health and Welfare, Division of Family and Community Services, is responsible for the administration and oversight of the programs carried out under the Chafee Foster Care Independence Program State Plan. The independent living activities and services planned throughout Federal Fiscal Years 2005 – 2009 will continue the commitment of Family and Community Services to provide individualized assistance to youth as they transition from foster care placement settings toward self-sufficiency. These services are a compilation of intervention strategies coordinated with eligible youth, community partners, family members, foster parents, and case managers. Idaho integrates independent living services with existing community-based programs to reach a larger number of youth with a more effective system of service delivery.

2. The Idaho Department of Health and Welfare assures that, as the state agency responsible for the implementation of the independent living program in Idaho, it will cooperate with national evaluations of the effects of the independent living program implemented to achieve the purposes of the Chafee Foster Care Independence Program (Section 477(b)(2)(F)).

3 (a). The State of Idaho independent living program is designed to achieve the purposes of sections 477(b)(2)(A) and section 477(a)(1-5) of the Act to assist youth in achieving a goal of self-sufficiency. The state's program and the strategies that have been or are being implemented are designed to help youth make a successful transition from foster care to living as a self-sufficient adult.

For the State of Idaho, services which are allowable and may be provided under the FFY 2005-2009 plan to assist youth, including Indian youth, make the transition to self-sufficiency include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Services to provide each participant with a written transitional independent living plan which shall be based on an assessment of his or her needs and shall be incorporated into the youth's case plan.
- Services to involve the biological parents and, if appropriate, extended family members, foster parents, and other relevant parties, including Indian tribes, in the development of the youth's independent living plan and services.
- Counseling and instruction in basic living skills such as, money management, home management, consumer skills, decision-making, time management, parenting, health care, access to community resources, transportation, leisure activities, and housing options,

including coordination of resources and/or development of contracts with appropriate service providers.

- Counseling and other assistance related to educational and vocational training (including preparation for a General Equivalency Diploma (GED), high school graduation, vocational education, and higher education) and the coordination of resources and/or development of contracts with appropriate service providers.
- Counseling and other assistance related to employment, such as job readiness training, job search assistance, and employment placement programs, and the coordination of resources and/or development of contracts with the Idaho Department of Employment, the Private Industry Councils, Vocational Rehabilitation, and other employment service providers, including tribal employment and training programs.
- Counseling, education, and other assistance related to human sexuality issues, such as reproductive health, family planning & pregnancy prevention, sexually transmitted diseases, and avoidance of high-risk sexual behaviors.
- Counseling and other assistance related to self-esteem, interpersonal relationships, and social skills development, such as: individual, family counseling, group counseling, and issues that are of cultural relevance.
- Provision of room and board assistance for eligible youth between the ages of 18 and 21 years who have aged out of the foster care system upon reaching the age of 18 years or older.
- Provision of other necessary services and assistance designed to improve participant's opportunities to successfully transition to self-sufficiency.
- Establishment of a system of outreach which would encourage youth currently in foster care to participate in the independent living program.
- Ongoing development of community organizational efforts aimed at increasing available services to youth.
- Development of ongoing support networks for youth leaving foster care including contracted services and involvement of the youth's natural support system.
- Training for agency and tribal staff, foster parents, residential care facility staff, and related groups to assure their preparation and competence to address the challenges and issues of youth preparing for independent living.
- Educational and training funds as needed to ensure completion of educational programs that would result in obtaining job related employment.

- Incentives for youth's participation in their assessment, plan and any activities related to the youth's goal of successful completion of their plan.

**Non-Allowable Services** – The grant funds awarded to Idaho through the CFCIP may not be used to supplant other funding sources for the cost of, or the cost of providing foster care placement. Nor will the program funds be used for the provision of room and board for youth under the age of 18 years old.

**Prioritized Services-** As part of the program design, Idaho will prioritize service provision to the following client groups:

- Indian youth
- Minority youth
- Homeless youth
- Pregnant and/or parenting youth
- Other youth meeting ILP eligibility criteria

Paramount to this process of assisting youth achieve self-sufficiency, and the overall goals of the state program, is an assessment of each eligible youth's needs relative to their readiness to live independently. Idaho has adopted and implemented the Ansell-Casey Lifeskills Assessment as our standard assessment instrument for this purpose. Each youth who is eligible for independent living services, including Indian youth, will participate in an assessment of their needs prior to the provision of services or use of any funds awarded to the state by the CFCIP. The youth as well as their family, foster parents, child welfare professionals, and others having knowledge of a youth's preparedness for living independently, including Indian tribes, may be included in this assessment process. It's anticipated that by conducting a consistent, comprehensive assessment of a youth's independent living needs, that the state and tribal programs will be more likely to target services that have a meaningful impact on the success of these youth as they prepare for living independently.

Upon completion of this assessment, a youth driven independent living plan will be developed for all eligible youth, including Native youth, placed in out-of-home care who are at least 15 years of age or older. This plan created in collaboration with the youth and other individuals familiar with the youth will include specific objectives and goals to be achieved. The result is that all eligible youth in alternate care placement will have a distinct, individualized independent living plan completed that is designed to help better prepare them to make the successful transition from foster care to a self-sufficient living status. This will also help to assure youth participating in the state program have a comprehensive plan that encourages the inclusion of those individuals likely to be a long-term, natural support system to facilitate their likelihood of successfully completing their plan. Incentives may be provided to the youth for participation in the assessment and development of their plan.

The youth's assessment and plan will be updated on an annual basis or if and when the youth's circumstances have changed.

As part of the Idaho plan to assist youth address their independent living needs, child welfare staff, tribal social service staff, foster parents, group home workers, and community partners will be targeted to receive training and technical assistance in the area of independent living. This will serve as a means of developing an increased awareness of, and the skills to address, the needs of youth as they prepare for independent living. Through the provision of relevant information and development of skills with the groups noted above we anticipate that eligible youth will be better supported in making a successful transition to self-sufficiency. The state administrator will be available to provide technical consultation to support regional, tribal, and community partners in the development and delivery of training related to independent living issues.

Some of the specific training that will be implemented in the State of Idaho related to this area of service include, at a minimum:

- Training for all new child welfare staff on independent living services via the Children and Family Services (CFS) Academy three times annually.
- Ongoing training for foster parents and other caregivers, including tribal foster parents, relative to the independent living needs of youth.
- Coordination with community partners in independent living related training programs.
- Coordination with Casey Family Programs to provide training on Casey's Integrated Transition Practice Framework (ITPF), "It's My Life" to child welfare staff, foster parents, Idaho Tribes, community partners and youth. Domains include Cultural and Personal Identity Formation, Supportive Relationships and Community Connections, Physical and Mental Health, Life Skills, Education, Employment, and Housing.
- Collaboration and/or coordination with tribal programs to provide training to tribal social service staff.
- Utilization of the National Resource Centers to provide training to all parties providing care and/or services to youth participating in state or tribal independent living programs.

The IL program design will be evaluated annually to determine program effectiveness. This will be accomplished by assessing the outcomes for youth pursuant to the provision of independent living services. The State of Idaho will develop outcome measurements for the program as required by the Federal Government, and in collaboration with community partners such as Indian tribes. An enhancement to the state's information system will assist in gathering data to measure the effectiveness of existing services. Additional evaluation of the program will evolve through the outcome measurements noted below.

Until final instruction and guidance on the required outcome measures is received from the Federal Government, Idaho will use those criteria noted in the CFCIP. At a minimum these will include:

- Educational attainment including high school graduation, GED, and vocational programs
- Homelessness
- Incarceration

- Pregnancy Prevention
- Employment
- Avoidance of dependency
- Minimization of high risk behaviors

3(b). Fundamental to a youth's successful transition to self-sufficiency is the acquisition of an education and/or training that will prepare them to obtain employment. Through the development of employment skills and opportunities we believe a youth's independence is more likely to be achieved. We also anticipate that by becoming gainfully employed, youth will have an enhanced sense of self-worth that will serve them well in other areas of their life. The Idaho independent living plan for FFYs 2005-2009 focuses on assuring that young people have the knowledge and skills necessary to know how to compete for and maintain a job. We believe this can best be achieved through a coordinated effort of child welfare professionals, tribal social service programs, foster parents, and service providers working with a youth.

The public schools are one of the primary providers of these educational opportunities that will position a youth to become gainfully employed. In addition, Idaho will partner with public and private organizations including, the Idaho Department of Labor, local colleges and universities to assure youth have the chance to be marketable in the work world. One means of accomplishing this will be to use the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) as a contract service provider in this area. VR emphasizes the employment of youth through vocational screening, job placement, and on the job training services.

The preparedness of IL youth to obtain employment can be achieved through the following means as part of this plan:

- Completion of GED, high school, or vocational education programs
- Support for attendance at a college or university
- Tutoring programs
- Counseling related to vocational planning
- Evaluation to determine vocational strengths and needs
- Job placement services

3(c). **Education and Training Voucher Program (ETV).** Closely aligned with this preparation to enter the work world is a youth's participation in postsecondary educational programs. Clearly the better educated a youth is, the more likely they are to find employment opportunities that will help them in becoming self-sufficient adults. Idaho encourages and supports youth, including Indian youth, in their pursuit to attain the highest level of education possible. To this end independent living services may provide an individual youth with the planning, counsel, and other supports, including use of room and board funds, necessary to pursue their postsecondary education. Idaho will also take advantage of other programs such as scholarships, grants, loans, and student work experience as strategies to help youth pursue their postsecondary educational goals. As of FFY 2004 the Education and Training Voucher Program is available for youth interested in pursuing their postsecondary educational goals.

Each year Idaho has an average of 60 foster youth reaching the age of majority (18 years) while in care. The mean average of eligible participants in the State's Chafee Foster Care Independence Program (CFCIP) over the last four years is 634 foster youth. The lack of means to continue in completing educational goals in Idaho is a perennial problem. The Idaho Department of Health and Welfare is committed to improving the odds for foster youth in educational and post-secondary training programs. The newly authorized Education and Training Vouchers (ETV) Program will allow Idaho to galvanize its efforts toward assisting foster youth to complete educational goals and/or post-secondary training programs.

Idaho's ETV program will expand and supplement the assistance authorized in the 1999 Foster Care Independence Act under section 477 (a)(3) "to help children who are likely to remain in foster care until 18 years of age prepare for and enter post-secondary training and educational institutions."

In assisting youth attain educational goals; Idaho will take advantage of Title II, Section 201, entitled "Educational and Training Vouchers for Youth Aging Out of Foster Care," which amends Section 477 of Title IV-E of the act to allow states to provide educational and training services to youth who meet eligibility criteria. A maximum of \$5,000 per year or the total cost of attendance at an institution of higher education may be used for attendance at an institution of higher education. An institution of higher education is defined as;

- Admits only students with a high school diploma or equivalent
- Awards a bachelor's degree or not less than a 2 year program that provides credit towards a degree
- Public or Non-Profit
- Accredited or pre-accredited
- Provides not less than 1 year of training towards gainful employment
- Admits only students beyond the age of compulsory school attendance.

These education and training programs will be coordinated by the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare independent living specialists to ensure that the total amount of educational assistance to youth does not exceed the total cost of attendance and there is no duplication of

services while assisting the youth in meeting their educational and training goals. The total amount of the award and any other Federal assistance can not exceed the “cost of attendance”. Idaho will certify that duplication of benefits under this or any other Federal program will be avoided and that the amount of assistance from any Federal sources combined with ETV funds will not exceed the cost of attendance as outlined in 477(b)(3)(1). For example, Idaho will approve costs for higher education that shall not exceed the lesser of \$5,000 or the total cost of attendance as defined in section 472 of the Higher Education Act. Social workers will work with youth in care through their IL plan to coordinate funding sources (eg, federal student financial aid programs, grants, etc.) to maximize the use of ETV funding and to avoid duplication.

The amount of a voucher shall be disregarded for purposes of determining the recipient’s eligibility for, or the amount of, any other Federal or Federally supported assistance, except that the total amount of educational assistance to a youth under this section and under other Federal and Federally supported programs shall not exceed the total cost of attendance, as defined in section 472 of the Higher Education Act of 1965, and except that the State agency shall take appropriate steps to prevent duplication of benefits under this and other Federal or Federally supported programs.

IDHW will offer youth educational opportunities to institutions of higher education to promote long term employment and career goals that will assist youth in making a successful transition to self-sufficiency.

In order to expand and strengthen educational and training opportunities for youth exiting out of Idaho’s foster care program, educational and training funds may be made available to Idaho’s Chafee eligible youth who:

- Were eligible for services under Idaho’s current Chafee program;
- Youth who were adopted from foster care after their 16<sup>th</sup> birthday;
- Youth participating in ETV on their 21<sup>st</sup> birthday shall remain eligible until 23 yrs. as long as they remain enrolled in a full-time postsecondary education or training program and are making satisfactory progress in completing their course of study or training.

IDHW will collaborate with our Idaho Tribes to make ETV funding available to Indian youth who are currently in Tribal custody or who have been in Tribal custody and meet the IL eligibility criteria.

Adequate funding for education and training has been a significant barrier to foster youth who often have special learning needs on top of having to work either full or part-time. ETV will allow the State to bear more costs for support including but not limited to, tuition and fees, room and board, counseling related to education and training programs tutoring, books, supplies, transportation, child care, etc.

ETV will allow Idaho to assist foster youth to make more manageable and safer transition to adult living by bearing the following expenditures:

- Provide for and direct any and all costs associated with attending an institution of higher education;
- Allow Idaho to approve costs for higher education that shall not exceed the lesser of \$5,000 or the total cost of attendance as defined in section 472 of the Higher Education Act; and,
- Allow the State to provide funds to foster youth for the purchase of technical equipment, to include, but not limited, computers, calculators, and supplies associated with course work.

*Cost of attendance may also include; tuition and fees, room and board, child care, rental or purchase of required equipment, allowance for books, transportation, required residential training, special study project etc.*

The public schools are one of the primary providers of these educational opportunities that will position a youth to become gainfully employed. In addition, Idaho will partner with public and private organizations to assure youth have the chance to be marketable in the work world. One means of accomplishing this will be to use the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) as a contract service provider in this area. VR emphasizes the employment of youth through vocational screening, job placement, and on the job training services. IDHW staff along with our Casey Family Partners collaborate on available scholarships and loans for youth and assist the youth in filling out applications to access scholarship programs which include the Orphan Foundation, federally funded grants including Pell Grants. Casey's Continuing Job, Education and Training Program (CJET) is also available to eligible youth.

Foster youth will be able to access the ETV program via the youth's Ansell-Casey Assessment and the youth's IL plan, in which the youth will be an integral, development partner. The IL plan will spell out the costs and conditions of the funding. ETV funds will be issued through an ETV fund application.

In order to apply for ETV funds the case plan will have to contain the following:

- Collaboration with secondary educational counselors, officials and other support persons;
- A plan for successful completion of secondary education;
- A plan for completion of required applications, tests, and financial aid forms;
- A plan for providing support during post-secondary educational attendance including, but not limited to, housing, child care and tutoring. These activities are allowable costs related to successful participation in post-secondary education and training.
- Documentation of the youth's involvement in the development of their educational plans and in the preparation for post-secondary education and training;
- Entry into FOCUS automated system

To ensure appropriate distribution of information regarding the ETV program Department of Health and Welfare staff, Casey Family Program staff, youth, Idaho Tribes, foster parents and community stakeholders will receive training on the ETV Program requirements and procedures as outlined in this amendment.



Outreach to eligible youth will be accomplished through Idaho's automated system FOCUS, by providing information on ETV to youth about to exit foster care, adding ETV information to the IDHW Foster Care/Adoption website, [www.idahochild.org](http://www.idahochild.org), Foster Club website, [www.fosterclub.com](http://www.fosterclub.com) link and [www.fyi3.com](http://www.fyi3.com) added to the IDHW foster care/adoption website, collaborative efforts with the Casey Family Program, Idaho's foster youth/alumni advisory group (FYI), informational pamphlets distributed to DHW offices, schools, community colleges and universities, Section 8 Housing agencies, Vocational Rehabilitation, IL Contractors and use of news media.

IDHW will track use of ETV funds separately from Chafee through Idaho's FOCUS automated system.

3(e). The potential of a youth to become self-sufficient is further enhanced by assuring they have supportive relationships with other individuals or groups. These resources for personal and emotional support may include immediate and extended family members, tribal connections, mentors, peers, and in some instances, agency representatives like child welfare staff and former foster parents. This will provide youth with community connections and a semblance of family who are available to provide them with counsel and other assistance during times of need. Whenever possible, Idaho's independent living program will encourage the development of appropriate relationships and involvement in culturally relevant activities as a means of supporting the personal needs of a youth.

3(f). Idaho will make available a full array of independent living services to eligible youth, including Native youth, who have aged out of foster care upon reaching the age of 18 years, but are not yet 21 years of age. These services are noted on page #1 of the plan. Based upon the assessed needs of an individual youth, specific services may include counseling, life skills training, academic programs, employment opportunities, access to culturally relevant activities, and similar assistance. In particular, expenses for room and board will be made available to eligible participants of this group of older youth to help them attain safe, adequate housing. Tribes will access IL funds for their eligible Tribal youth through the appropriate Regional Children and Family Services IL Coordinator. Funds to Tribal youth will be allocated based on the completion of the Ansell-Casey Assessment and the youth's IL Plan for meeting transitional living goals.

The majority of independent living services for youth 18-21 years old will be delivered by agency staff, tribal social service programs, and contractors. These services may also be delivered by our community partners who have collaborated with the state to meet the needs of youth aging out of foster care placement. As an example, the Casey Family Programs has committed two full-time positions to assist the state in our Region III and IV programs to provide services and support to older youth who have left foster care. This collaboration with Casey Family Programs should enhance and facilitate more timely and relevant services to youth in these areas of the state. The allocation of staff to further Idaho's IL program will be used as in-kind match for the State's grant award. A component of the services provided to youth shall include the development of personal and community support systems. Connections for youth may include, but are not limited to, community organizations, churches, birth family, and other

significant figures in their lives. Youth can be provided with phone cards and travel assistance to facilitate sustained connections.

### **Room and Board**

For the State of Idaho independent living program, room and board is defined as those expenses which assist eligible youth, including Indian youth to secure adequate housing, foodstuffs, and other necessary household items which promote the goal of self-sufficiency. Independent living room and board funds may be used for, but are not limited to, the following:

- Rent payments
- Security, cleaning and similar deposits
- Costs related to household utilities
- Foodstuffs
- Other household goods and supplies that are essential for a youth's health, safety, or well-being
- Housing related expenses essential to attend an institution of higher learning, vocational programs or comparable educational setting

4. (a.) Idaho supports the development of the Foster Youth/Alumni in Idaho (FYI) advisory group. The advisory group is made up of youth in care and youth who have been in care, between the ages of 15-21, and includes alumni of the child welfare system. The youth leadership group is engaged in the education of state and government leaders, general public, caregivers, and peers regarding the needs of children and young adults in the child welfare system. Advocating for positive changes in the child welfare system, FYI members help develop and guide improvements to legislation and policies in order to normalize the foster care experience and to create safety, comfort, and opportunities for all children in care.

(b) Youth may be provided with financial incentives for participation in IL related training or presentations and training that they provide to foster parents, staff, legislators, judges, and to the community at large.

5. The independent living program has been a state administered and delivered system since the inception of these services in 1987. The Idaho Department of Health and Welfare has a regionalized service delivery structure. Program development and planning is accomplished at the central office level and program implementation is the responsibility of each of the agency's seven (7) regions. This allows for program modification to address the unique needs and issues of specific communities.

The program has served, and will continue to, serve eligible youth in all geographic areas of the state. Youth who move from one region to another will be served by the region in which the youth currently holds residence. Any youth for whom the state is legally responsible regarding placement and care and who satisfies the State of Idaho's criteria for IL eligibility, may be served through the program. The state may also provide services to eligible youth between 15-18 years of age who have exited foster care settings if there is an assessed independent living need and providing services is appropriate to assisting them successfully transition to self-sufficiency.

In keeping with the CFCIP, Indian youth for whom a tribe is responsible for placement and care and who satisfy the eligibility criteria may be served. Youth who are dually committed through an expansion of the Juvenile Justice act and are not in a detention facility or hospital setting may be served if they meet the eligibility criteria.

6. Historically, Idaho has provided independent living services to eligible youth when they reach the age of 16. Under this plan the state will initiate these services beginning at 15 years of age when a youth has been determined “likely to remain in foster care until their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday.” In making this determination, Idaho has established a standard of ninety (90) consecutive days of foster care placement as the criteria which indicate that a youth is likely to remain in foster care until they reach 18. By initiating independent living services for youth younger than 16, more time will be available to provide services and better prepare these youth to successfully transition to self-sufficiency. The services to youth in this age range will include all the services noted in the plan, except for room and board, that will accomplish the purpose of the CFCIP. This includes attending to the service areas of basic life skills, education, employment, and personal support. Services to youth of this age under Idaho’s plan will be provided by state agency staff, tribal social service programs, and community partners or contractors.

For youth between the ages of 15 and 18 years old who are residing in foster care placements, services will be initiated with an assessment of their readiness for self-sufficiency. Subsequent to the assessment an independent living plan will be developed to support eligible youth in acquiring the knowledge, skills, and resources necessary to make a successful transition to adulthood. Most of these services will be provided by foster parents, child welfare professionals, tribal social service programs, and/or our partners, both private and public. Youth will also be instrumental in the planning and implementation of their independent living service plans to assure they have responsibility for their success. This age group will have the entire range of services noted earlier in the plan available to them except that no room and board payments may be made in their behalf.

Idaho will also provide independent living services for eligible youth, including Indian youth, who have left foster care placement upon reaching the age of 18 but have not yet reached 21. Youth in this age range may receive all appropriate independent living services including the room and board program. These services to older youth may be delivered by a wide range of service providers such as state agency staff, tribal social service programs, and partners such as the Casey Family Programs. This group of older youth will also be expected to participate in an assessment and planning process similar to that of younger foster youth.

It’s noteworthy that amendments to Idaho’s Child Care Licensing Reform Act and the rules for child care licensing during the 2001 Idaho Legislative session will likely impact services to youth 18-21 years of age. In particular, a change allowing foster children who reach the age of 18 years old to continue in foster care placement up to their 21 birthday will promote ongoing support for the purpose of assisting youth make a successful transition to self-sufficiency.

7. The State of Idaho’s plan was developed in consultation with private and public child welfare agencies, each of the six (6) Indian tribes residing in the state, older youth who are preparing for

independent living, and child welfare advocates including the Administration for Children and Families. These groups and individuals provided invaluable recommendations in creating Idaho's plan of services to youth preparing for independent living.

However, Idaho believes public input regarding the independent living program is an ongoing process and will continue to consult with the public and private sectors, including Indian tribes, to focus on the continuous improvement of services to assist youth preparing for independent living. The Idaho plan was influenced significantly by tribal input to assure services to Indian youth were made a predominant part of the FFYs 2001-2004 plan. As another example of the influence from tribal groups in this process, Idaho's state administrator in consultation with the state Family and Community Services Tribal Relations Manager will routinely review the service and planning relevance for Indian youth, via tribal programs.

In addition to the public input noted above, during the process of revising Idaho's rules for child care licensing, over thirty public meetings were held with the people of Idaho. Though these consultations which included input from foster parents, child welfare professionals, Indian tribes, and other community representatives who were focused primarily on issues related to foster family licensure, many of the issues under consideration were closely related to independent living services, e.g., continued foster care for youth up to their 21<sup>st</sup> birthday, training for foster parents, etc. Therefore, public comments on the child care licensing issues were considered in developing the State of Idaho plan for independent living, when relevant.

An outgrowth of this consultation process has been the development of an agreement with Casey Family Programs (CFP) to support expansion of independent living services in the state. One of the ways in which CFP will support Idaho's efforts is by providing part of the funding match required for the state's grant allotment. This funding match may be in the form of in-kind services with CFP allocating 2 full-time positions for direct service work and training capabilities. In addition, CFP will partner in other direct services including staff development and training, foster parent training, and case consultation or planning to enhance positive outcomes for participating youth. An example of the partnership between IDHW and CFP was the integration of the Ansell-Casey Life Skill Assessment instrument for assessing a youth's readiness for independent living. CFP provided a trainer to collaborate with the state administrator and deliver 23 training sessions on this assessment instrument at no cost to the State of Idaho. We anticipate continued consultation and partnership with CFP to assure a higher level of service to youth eligible for the program.

Also, the Department continues to meet, at both the state and regional level, with partner programs to address issues and concerns in the area of independent living services. Often representatives from the county juvenile services, housing and transitional living programs, educators, state agencies, and other groups having an interest in youth who are in need of supportive service programs are included in these meetings. Through this ongoing dialogue the Department anticipates services to youth can be better coordinated, expanded, and delivered in such a way that achieves the purpose of the CFCIP.

Regarding the provision of Medicaid services to those youth eligible under the state plan, Idaho did not choose this option. This decision was based in part upon the state legislature's intent to contain the cost of services under the Medicaid program. Though Idaho does not currently provide Medicaid for older youth, youth up to their 19<sup>th</sup> birthday are eligible for the state's Children's Health Insurance Program.

8. The State of Idaho has developed the eligibility criteria for a youth's participation in the independent living program through a process of consultation and public input. These criteria have been developed to emphasize services to those youth most likely to remain in foster care until their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. For example, the Idaho plan requires that a youth be in foster care placement for ninety (90) consecutive days, since this is an indicator they will more likely be in care long term. These eligibility criteria also recognize the importance of early identification, intervention, and ongoing service to youth. The requirements to establish eligibility under Idaho's plan for independent living services specify that:

- A youth must be, or have been, the responsibility of the State or Indian tribe either through a court order or voluntary placement agreement with the child's family.
- Only youth between the ages of 15-21 years are eligible for services and use of funds through the independent living program.
- Youth must have resided in an eligible placement setting which includes foster care, group care, Indian boarding schools, or similar foster care placement and excludes detention facilities, forestry camps, or other settings primarily designed for services to delinquent youth.
- A youth must have resided in an eligible foster care setting for 90 consecutive days.
- Room and board services will be available only to those eligible youth, including Indian youth, who have aged out of foster care settings upon reaching the age of 18 years but have not yet reached the age of 21.

9. The State of Idaho Independent Living Program does not discriminate against any youth because of race, religion, gender, ethnicity, or handicapping condition. Each youth who satisfies the eligibility requirements for services under the plan will have available to them the full array of benefits necessary to achieve the purposes of the CFCIP. Individualized services will be based on a youth's assessed needs relative to their preparation for self-sufficiency, their willingness to participate in the programs services, and the availability of services necessary to help them prepare for a successful transition to self-sufficiency. In addition, the state administrator for the program plans to conduct an annual review of 5% of the case records for youth receiving independent living services. As part of that review process the administrator will be looking for any indications that any individual or group of youth has not received "fair and equitable treatment."

Following are the goals and action steps for Independent Living and the Education and Training Voucher Programs for 2005-2009:

Goal 1:

Every youth 15 years of age and older in custody of IDHW has a case plan that specifically addresses life skills, education, employment, housing, use of community resources and life long connections which provide support within their community to the youth.

Action Plan:

1. Development of the case plan which is youth driven, with a primary permanency goal and a concurrent permanency plan. Case plan indicates the goals to be accomplished and time lines for completion, as well as provision for services required to meet the case plan goals.

**Ongoing**

2. Quality Assurance by the Field Office Supervisors that the case plan reflects the permanency goals as well as the identified needs and provision for services.

**Ongoing**

3. Community Transition Services and technical assistance will be provided by Casey Family Programs to the field offices.

**Ongoing**

4. Service providers will submit semi-annual progress reports to the caseworkers.

**September 2004**

5. The foster family will be informed of the results from the independent living skills assessments completed by the youth in their care and invited to participate in development of the case plan. Foster families will be provided with resource needed to develop the skills by the youth. Provision for support and resources will be indicated in the case plan.

**Ongoing**

Goal 2:

Develop connections for youth within their communities so they have every opportunity to successfully transition to adulthood. Provide information to youth who have exited from care to access independent living and ETV services.

Action Plan:

1. Create informational brochure which lists the contact information for independent living for IDHW Children and Family Services regional offices, Casey Family Programs, and service providers through out the state.

**January 2005**

2. Create a resource handbook for youth in care and those who have exited the program.  
Provide these handbooks to youth as they exit the foster care program.

**July 2005**

Goal 3:

Provide opportunities for youth who age out of care to access Education and Training Vouchers

Action Plan:

1. Develop and implement standards for providing education and training voucher services to youth.

**October 2004**

2. Continue outreach process to youth who have exited care by collaborating with Casey Family Programs for design and development of an ETV program brochure.

**July 2004**

Goal 4:

Develop Standards for consistent delivery of Independent Living services to IL eligible youth.

Action Plan:

1. Convene committee that includes IDHW staff, Casey Family Program staff, foster parents, youth and Tribal representatives to develop standards for consistent delivery of IL services.

**August 2004**

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